

HYATTSVILLE ARMORY
5340 Baltimore Avenue
Hyattsville
Prince Georges County
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-977

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17-HYATV,
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PHOTOGRAPHS AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HYATTSVILLE ARMORY

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Location: 5340 Baltimore Avenue, Hyattsville, Prince George's County, Maryland

Significance: Hyattsville Armory, built in 1918, was the first Armory building constructed in the county and the fifth in the state. It is representative of the Medieval castle-like styling that was typical of early 20th-century armories and other military related structures. This was the first in a series of armories designed by state architect Robert Lawrence Harris during the administration of Governor Albert C. Ritchie.

Description: This is a large structure built of irregularly coursed ashlar granite with a rectangular, two-story main block and a perpendicular, single story, ell--all on a raised basement. The east front facade is symmetrically balanced with a rounded central pavilion flanked by squared towers with battlements. The battlement effect extends to the roofline of the main block, and the building has a water table and beltcourse of limestone. The central pavilion includes a round-arched entry into an open vestibule beyond which is a double doorway. Above the doorway is a tripart window, and along the roofline, battlements and the seal of Maryland carved in limestone. The windows in the main block are nine-over-nine-light sash, with six-over-six-light sash with round-arched lintels in the basement. The six-bay-long rear section has stepped buttresses between the tripart windows, and a low hipped roof. To the rear of this has been added a two-story gallery building constructed of similar materials.

History: The Hyattsville Armory was built in 1918 as the headquarters for the First Maryland Infantry, Company F, formed on the 8th of May 1912. They were later joined with the Fifth Maryland Infantry Regiment to form the 115th Infantry, 29th Division. In March of 1919, some of the men of the 29th Division were

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among those World War I Veterans whose meeting in Paris resulted in the formation of the American Legion. Company F received its charter on the 8th of July 1918, becoming the first Legion Post in the county, the third in the state.

The company vacated the armory in July of 1972, in accordance with the State of Maryland Military Department Order #16. The armory was then used as a meeting place for numerous civil and church groups in the community until it was sold by the state in 1975. It is currently being used as offices, a restaurant and a theater for the performing arts, with an art gallery added to the rear.

The building was designed by Robert Lawrence Harris, state architect during the administration of Governor Albert C. Ritchie. As the first armory built in the county this may have served as a prototype for a number of others, also built by Harris, throughout the state. Its design, made to resemble a medieval castle, was typical of military related architecture in general, and of armory buildings in particular.

Sources:

Aleshire, William A., Robert F. Sellers and James Maher (Prince George's Jaycees), National Register of Historic Places, Inventory--Nomination Form, Hyattsville Armory, prepared 1979.

Historian:

Catherine C. Lavoie
Historic American Buildings Survey
June 1991